

3 March, 1878

III. FAITH, LOVE OF THE TRUTH

It is not easy to explain the spirit of the Assumption as I understand it. To see and to experience within oneself the unity of a whole is much easier than to explain it. It would be grateful if someone else could do it, but I really do not know who could, so I will simply share with you the insights that God gives me in prayer. Perhaps, if all these insights are put together, they will make a whole.

According to my humble way of seeing things, the primary right of God is to be believed when He speaks and our primary duty is to receive the Word of God with profound respect and great faith. You can understand that if this is the duty of all Christians, we should go one step further. We should respond with love and adoration to the Word by which God reveals Himself. You can understand without difficulty that this is the foundation and the beginning. How could we know God and know what we owe Him if He had never revealed Himself to us? What possible tie could there be between God and His creature if He had never spoken to His creature in any way? It goes without saying that God endowed us with faculties that enable us to understand certain truths of the natural order, things about God, about ourselves, and about our relationship with God, etc., but only with great difficulty and with a mixture of uncertainty and error.

The ancient philosophy of the classical world represents the greatest effort of the unaided human spirit. In the midst of noble thoughts, so different from the abject ideas into which materialistic philosophy has plunged itself today, how many contradictions and uncertainties we find, what dim and imperfect ideas of God, creation and of future life! Yet the fact must not be forgotten, that the wise men of ancient times were to a certain extent enlightened by the truths that had been revealed by God to Adam and by the lights that the Jews, the guardians of the Divine Words, carried to all the corners of the earth where they were dispersed.

Today we no longer have these doubts nor the need for anxious searching. *God has spoken to us.* He spoke at the creation of the world. He spoke to the patriarchs and to prophets. It is the totality of these teachings, inspired by the Holy Spirit that makes up the treasure of the Old Testament. Then God sent His only Son into the world. Jesus Christ came to earth in

order to give us truth and to teach us all we need to know and practice. Lastly, He gave us His Church, the guardian of the Divine Word, which explains this Word with light from on high. Many others have sought the Truth. We alone possess it in all its entirety,¹ come down from heaven for us. This truth desires to enlighten us still further to the degree to which we study it and grow in love for it.

How can we repay God for such a gift? By faith. Faith is the fundamental characteristic of the Assumption and if faith characterizes all Christians, then it must be ours in a very special way. We must let ourselves be penetrated by it. To be a true daughter of the Assumption, our faith must be firm and ardent. It must animate all our thoughts and works, all our relationships and contacts. It should be as the air that our souls breathe.

But other institutes also have this characteristic... Yes, no doubt they do and the same will be true of a great deal of what I will say to you. There is nothing singular about our spirituality. Our spirit consists in being rich in the spirit of the Church. It can be our joy and desire that the same also radiates from other institutes and persons, on condition that it also radiates from us.

I do not need to teach you that faith is a supernatural virtue which was infused into us at Baptism, and that we accept this precious gift of our own free will. What we need to learn is the means to develop it in ourselves. Above all, we must simply believe all that the Church believes and this in true faith, believing that it is God Himself who is speaking to us and that the Church is moved by the Holy Spirit in all that she counsels and teaches.

We must reject all that is not in harmony with the teaching of the Church and of faith, anything that can separate us from Catholic teaching. We should not seek what is extraordinary. IN all that concerns doctrine, we should seek what is most sure. In our reading and study we should seek the most sound. Life is not long enough to read all the good books that exist, so let us leave those that are suspect. Let us prefer good books and develop a critical spirit which is sensitive to error. Moreover, as you know, the faith that renders man just is formed in the heart. Let us burn with love for divine truth.

Our Father, St. Augustine, was one of those great minds about whom I spoke above, who passed through terrible doubts and darkness in seeking the Truth. Although born among Catholics, he wandered from one teaching or sect to another; he tried all the philosophies and tested every opinion.

¹ Truth 'in its entirety' is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Everywhere he found only poverty, misery, contradictions, suffering of the mind and soul. When at last he came back to the true faith, when he finally possessed the Truth that was given him to grasp with all the greatness of his genius – the Truth towards which he aspired with such ardor – he conceived a love for the Truth that radiates on every page of his works. You will find the love of truth, the love for sound doctrine and the love of God revealed to us, in all his writings.

In this regard we should be his spiritual children. The spirit of adoration which should be ours in a special way, will lead us to receive the Word of God and the teachings of the faith with an ardent love. Faith should penetrate us so that we are guided more and more by the viewpoint of faith rather than by a merely human viewpoint. Little by little, the reality which is unseen should take priority over what is seen. There is the measure of our progress.

A Religious of the Assumption should be a person in whom, the attitudes of faith take precedence over all others and reveal things unseen to her. God who is present in this room and whom we do not see, the angels who watch over us and whom we do not see, the treasures of the Redemption which we receive through the Church and which our sense do not perceive and the infinite evil of the least sin. This is the life of faith. We must grow in faith each day, nourishing it so that what is revealed, what is certain, what is from God, fills our souls more and more and replaces all that is merely natural, transitory and passing. It says in the Rule, “in all that is passing we should always see the excellence of charity which does not pass.” I would add that the truth which does not pass should outweigh passing truths so that we arrive in eternity, enlightened already by eternal truths. Thus the passage will be easy.

I must say here how consoled I have been at the deathbed of many of our sisters on seeing how the light of eternity had already taken possession of their souls. They were open to the lights which have no end and were out of reach of those false glimmers which render life here below obscure instead of illuminating it, and which too often fills us with vain preoccupations.

I am not sure that my words are clear and strong enough to impress upon you how much this spirit of faith is essential to the spirit of adoration. St. Augustine tells us that we should have not less respect for the Word of God than we have for his Sacred Body.

He gives Himself to us in the hiddenness of His Word in the same way as in the hiddenness of the Eucharist.

We incense the book of the Gospel with respect. It is recorded in the same way Holy Gospel in reference to the mysteries of Our Lord, that the Blessed Virgin received all these things and meditated on them in her heart.² You should imitate her, Sisters. Always show the greatest reverence for all that touches on the Word of God or that is in the realm of faith. Receive it into your heart and meditate on it.

Someone has said that each word of the Gospel must be weighed as a moneylender weighs his gold, because it is the gold of Divine Truth that is given us by each word of the Gospel. If you weigh them as such, how quickly they will fill your heart! How you will try to make them your own and live them! Here is a vast subject of meditation. If we are often plagued by distractions, it is because we are not penetrated deeply enough by the Gospel.

Have an ardent love for the things that are of God, for adoration has a quality of ardor. Desire to know as much as possible of Divine Truth and not just the truths that are the object of human curiosity. If you do not know how to analyze certain biological substances or how such and such a gas is formed, this is not very important. I do not wish to under-estimate the importance of the natural sciences, but they are not of the order of Divine Truth. We will never be able to know enough about revelation, about God and His attributes; about the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; about Our Lord Jesus Christ and the union of His divine and human natures, in a word, all that the Catholic Church teaches. The more your soul is transformed by Divine Truth, the more you desire to know the teachings of the Church and the doctrines of the Saints so as to follow in their footsteps and to please Jesus Christ, the more you will be Religious of the Assumption.

A part of the fervor of your faith and the ardor of your adoration is to love this order of truths. You will be helped by prayer which will enable you to penetrate the doctrine of Jesus Christ. He will open the eyes of your souls and will purify you so that God can fill you with His light.

Today I have purposely chosen to speak to you about the doctrine of truth and not about Him who is Truth itself. I will speak of this on another occasion. You must love this doctrine and approach it in a spirit of

² Lk. 2, 19.

adoration, with the faith and fervor that results from wanting to know it better and to make it come alive in your soul. Lastly, you must meditate on it with such great reverence and attention that it becomes, as it were, incarnated in your life.

I can only express these things to you in an imperfect way. You must make them your own in prayer. See how faith is the principal characteristic of our spirit, how it must act in our life, transform our intelligence, fill our affections and enkindle in us a new love for God. How many have lived without having the fullness of knowledge that we have! Why have you and I been chosen? Why have we been placed in a Congregation that gives us all the possible means to learn as much as we can about the divine truth? Did we merit it? No, certainly not. It is only due to the goodness of God. For this gift, adore Him, bless Him and love Him ever more.

Sometimes people say that the rights of God are crushing. I have never been able to understand this. On the contrary, it seems to me that the rights God has over us are rights of love and mercy is the right to be believed by us a right that crushes? Does it not rather, uplift and fulfill us? If God did not impose faith upon us where would we go, poor and miserable creatures that we are? We would be at the mercy of all kinds of doctrines as was St. Augustine. Is it not almost too wonderful that we are able to believe in that which enlightens us in this world and glorifies us in eternity?

The prelude to eternity is to believe ever more in God and in Our Lord Jesus Christ. He, himself told us, "Eternal life is to know you, my God, and Him Whom You have sent."³ Jesus Christ is the One sent by the heavenly Father. To know Him better is already to possess in this world knowledge of eternal life.

Let us, therefore, love our Institute which constantly reminds us of this spirit of faith and gives us so many opportunities to grow in faith.

³ Jn. 17.